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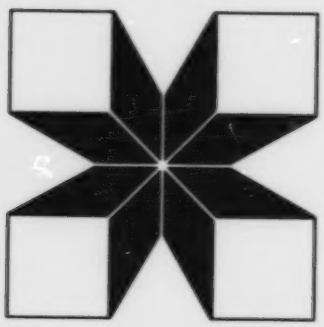

CANADA

FAMILIA Y APRENDIZAJE

LECCIONES DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN RECIENTE

FAMILY AND LEARNING

READINGS FROM RECENT RESEARCH

BENJAMIN ALVAREZ AND
NATALIA IRIARTE

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91-06182/

IDRC-MR283e,s
Mayo/May 1991

Familia y Aprendizaje

Lecciones de la investigación reciente

Family and Learning

Readings from recent research

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PRESENTACION

El clima socio-economicó cambiante en el cual los paises del Tercer Mundo en Africa, Asia, América Latina y el Caribe entran en los años 1990, tiene un impacto directo en las percepciones predominantes sobre el papel de la educación en el desarrollo. En medio de una crisis generalizada de recursos, la que lleva al Estado a buscar nuevas formas de financiar la educación, y en la cual se hace cada vez m¦s difícil de responder a las demandas crecientes por m¦s y mejor educación pap niños y jóvenes, la familia es reconocida como un agente educativo fundamental.

La familia y la comunidad, en esta nueva década, se espera que jueguen un papel central en la realización de los objetivos del movimiento mundial sobre educación para todos. Esto exige tener una mejor comprehensión del amplio papel educativo de la familia, m¦s all¦ de las fronteras de la escuela. Es en este contexto, que el Programa de Población, Educacioñ y Sociedad del CIID presenta esta revisión de la literatura m¦s reciente sobre el tema.

FOREWORD

The changing socio-economic and political climate in which Third World countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean are entering into the 1990s has a direct impact on the predominant perceptions of the role of education in development. In the midst of a general crisis of resources, which has compelled the State to look for new ways to address the financing of education, and where it is becoming increasingly difficult to respond to the growing demands for more and better schooling for children and youths, the family is being recognized as a pivotal educational agent.

The family and the community, in this new decade, are expected to play a central role in the achievement of the world movement for education for all. This requires a better comprehension of the broad educational role of the family, beyond the boundaries of the classroom. It is in this context that the Population, Education and Society Program at IDRC presents this review of the most recent literature on the topic.

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FAMILIA Y APRENDIZAJE

Lecciones de la investigación reciente

Existe un acuerdo muy generalizado de que muchos de los problemas que enfrenta la sociedad de hoy: drogadicción, violencia, deterioro humano a escala masiva, enfermedades controlables que se extienden rapidamente, etc., no pueden solucionarse sin el decisivo apoyo de las instituciones educativas; paradójicamente, estas parecen impotentes cuando están más extendidas a través del mundo entero y a lo largo de la vida de las personas, y cuando se ha adquirido un gran cúmulo de conocimientos sobre el aprendizaje y sobre los ciclos de la vida humana. En efecto, durante los últimos cincuenta años hemos aprendido más sobre la dinámica del desarrollo humano que durante los siglos anteriores; sin embargo, tenemos mucha dificultad para utilizar esos descubrimientos en los procesos de socialización de las nuevas generaciones.

El conocimiento sobre el desarrollo humano se ha enriquecido gracias a la investigación en campos tales como la salud pública y la nutrición, las ciencias sociales y particularmente la psicología y la educación. Los hallazgos realizados hasta la fecha, han confirmado la importancia de los primeros años de vida en el desarrollo posterior del ser humano, así como la posibilidad de influir positivamente en este proceso.

FOCO SOBRE LA ESCUELA PRIMARIA

Tales hallazgos motivaron a muchos investigadores a diseñar y probar estrategias de intervención, especialmente para la etapa pre-escolar, muchas de ellas basadas en las actividades de la familia. No obstante, ese interés, no se mantuvo en relación con la etapa siguiente: la escuela primaria. Pareciera que una vez que el niño ingresa a la escuela, la responsabilidad se transfiere de la familia a otras instituciones sociales; sin embargo, la familia continúa siendo un contexto fundamental de socialización para el niño y un recurso para su éxito en otros contextos, como lo indican algunos estudios hechos al respecto (Bloom, 1981; Comer, 1984; Scott-Jones, 1984)

La bibliografía que aparece en esta misma edición, tiene como foco principal la relación familia-escuela durante los primeros años en que ésta se establece, y sólo secundariamente la cuestión de las intervenciones pre-escolares y su efecto posterior. Evidentemente, la revisión no es exhaustiva aunque cubre una muestra de trabajos recientes, publicados en Norte América, América Latina, algunos países de Europa, Asia y Africa.

Los estudios realizados en Africa y Asia forman parte, en su mayoría, de proyectos gubernamentales de gran magnitud sobre asuntos generales relacionados con el desarrollo y crecimiento de la población infantil.

La mayoría de los estudios hechos son esencialmente cualitativos y básicamente exploratorios; varios de ellos emplean el método etnográfico y un acercamiento de tipo antropológico; unos cuantos se han diseñado siguiendo un modelo experimental. En Tailandia, por ejemplo, se encontró un programa de intervención que demostró resultados positivos de actividades orientadas a mejorar el rendimiento escolar a través de la educación de los padres de familia (Janhon, 1983)

En América Latina, en contraposición a lo sucedido con el tema del desarrollo del niño antes de los cinco años de edad, la documentación sobre aprendizaje, familia y escuela primaria, es bastante pobre; son muy pocos los estudios publicados al respecto. La bibliografía presentada más adelante, rescata aquellos trabajos que directa o indirectamente puedan estar relacionados con el éxito del niño en la primaria.

La mayoría de tales estudios toca tangencialmente la problemática familia-escuela, pero ninguno de ellos arroja información suficiente para orientar una política coherente. Como se anotó anteriormente, la investigación sobre los primeros años de vida de la población infantil en América Latina, además de haber sido muy rica, proporcionó información útil para el diseño de políticas sociales en varios paises. También se han realizado diversos análisis sobre el rendimiento interno y externo de la escuela primaria, generalmente vinculado a préstamos internacionales para el sector educativo. No obstante en la investigación social, la temática de la familia como apoyo a la educación formal ha sido inexplicablemente relegada a un segundo plano. Las investigaciones realizadas en los mismos países, en torno de la problemática familia-escuela, en lo tocante a su metodología, son poco innovadoras y con escasa potencialidad explicativa y analítica.

En Norte América principalmente, y parcialmente en

Europa y Australia, se ha venido trabajando desde hace ya varios años sobre la exploración e identificación de los factores de tipo familiar y propios del contexto hogareño, que puedan estar interviniendo en el proceso de socialización del niño durante la edad escolar primaria. A partir de varios estudios descriptivos, ha sido posible comprobar la importancia y el rol determinante que desempeñan variables propias del medio ambiente familiar en el desempeño del niño en la escuela. Aunque los estudios experimentales y de intervención son aún escasos, existen ya evidencias que permiten considerar la formación en la familia como de vital importancia para el éxito en la escuela y como susceptible de cambio positivo.

La investigación en este campo es muy promisoria frente a la necesidad universal de mejoramiento de la educación formal, muy especialmente entre las poblaciones que han sufrido el impacto más negativo de las recientes dificultades económicas internacionales.

Existen muchos interrogantes para cuyas respuestas no hay evidencia disponible; sin embargo, la investigación puede proporcionar orientación y alternativas que merecen ser consideradas por las familias, los gobiernos y los medios de comunicación a través de todo el mundo.

PREGUNTAS CLAVES

Las siguientes preguntas pueden ayudar al lector a abordar la creciente literatura que se está desarrollando en torno al tema del aprendizaje infantil y el apoyo de la familia:

¿se está derrumbando la familia como institución primaria de socialización?; ¿sería mejor entregar la educación a quienes se han preparado para ello y dejar a la familia la función de producción de los recursos necesarios?; ¿qué puede hacer la familia para preparar al niño para su ingreso a la escuela?; ¿qué puede hacer la familia durante los primeros años de escolarización del niño para apoyar su aprendizaje?; ¿cuáles son las tendencias de la investigación actual que puedan tener una repercusión en la educación de los niños de primaria?

1. ¿Se está derrumbando la familia como institución primaria de socialización?

El proceso de socialización se origina en el seno del grupo familiar y es precisamente allí donde se ha venido

produciendo una serie de transformaciones importantes relacionadas con la interacción de sus miembros, con sus roles, expectativas culturales y funciones frente a los cambios y exigencias de las sociedades contemporáneas.

Algunos investigadores afirman que la familia es quizá el núcleo donde más visibles se hacen los cambios sociales (Scott-Jones, 1986; Durojaiye, M.O.A., 1984; Fei Xiao Tong, 1982; Kibuka, E.P., 1984; Mamani, P.M., 1982; Mink, I.T. y Nihira, K., 1986; Omari, I.M., 1984; Otaala, B. 1983). Es común hoy en día referirse a la "crisis de familia" como problemática central de nuestra sociedad. Varias inquietudes se desprenden en relación con las acciones, normas, principios y valores que está impartiendo la familia de hoy; existe una creciente preocupación de si la familia está asumiendo la función socializadora que le corresponde y si está ofreciendo al niño el apoyo necesario para su crecimiento, desarrollo y educación (Coleman, 1987).

La familia como institución social está cambiando, pero demuestra simultáneamente un enorme potencial de adaptación, a pesar de que dos de sus principales soportes, la natalidad y el matrimonio, muestran descensos estadísticos significativos. En primer lugar, el tamaño de la familia ha disminuído; actualmente el caso más común es el de la familia compuesta por dos o tres personas. En segundo lugar, no existe hoy en día un patrón único de estructura familiar; se presentan diferentes tipos de composición que incluso dificultan clasificarla. No obstante, la familia continúa siendo la célula fundamental de la sociedad contemporánea (Scott-Jones, 1986).

El ritmo acelerado bajo el cual se han venido produciendo todos estos cambios estructurales, dificulta la posibilidad de asimilar y analizar sus implicaciones sobre la vida y el desarrollo de los niños del mañana. Sin embargo, es claro que la familia sigue ejerciendo una influencia decisiva en el desarrollo físico, intelectual y social de la población infantil, haciendo frente a diferentes problemáticas según la etapa de desarrollo en la cual se encuentre el niño. Durante los primeros años de vida, la nutrición, los cuidados básicos de salud, el lenguaje y la estimulación temprana constituyen el foco de atención y apoyo de los padres para con el niño. Durante el pre-escolar y la escuela primaria, la problemática se centra en la adaptación al colegio, en el desarrollo de habilidades cognoscitivas y en la formación del juicio moral y de los valores. Más tarde, en la adolescencia, priman aquellos aspectos relacionados con el comportamiento social, el rendimiendo académico y la orientación profesional.

Desde hace muchos años y en forma muy consistente, la

investigación social ha demostrado relaciones estrechas entre la educación de los padres y el rendimiento académico de sus hijos; entre el status socioeconómico de la familia y el desarrollo físico y mental de los niños pequeños, y entre las actitudes de los mayores y el comportamiento de los menores en la familia.

Estas conclusiones parecen corroborar los dictámenes del sentido común; sin embargo, los actuales cambios de la familia misma nos plantean nuevas preguntas tales como: ¿Cuáles son entonces las funciones de la familia 'moderna'?, ¿cuál es su rol dentro del proceso de educación y formación de la generación del mañana?, ¿cómo y en qué términos se plantea su interacción con otras instituciones socializadoras como el plantel educativo?. Teniendo en cuenta que el desarrollo del niño se lleva a cabo en ambos contextos familia-escuela, ¿cuál sería el papel potencial de la familia?, y ¿cuáles serían las funciones de la escuela?. ¿En qué términos se podría plantear la interacción familia-escuela?. A estos y otros interrogantes similares se enfrenta la política social de todos los países, pero particularmente de aquellos en los cuales la población infantil se encuentra en situación de mayor necesidad y menores recursos.

2. ¿Sería mejor entregar la educación a quienes se han preparado para ello y dejar en manos de la familia la función de producción de los recursos necesarios?

La familia y la escuela como instituciones de socialización aportan un insumo diferente al proceso educativo del niño.

Las funciones y productos que se imparten a nivel de la escuela, se diferencian de otro tipo de insumo, muy diferente pero complementario, que es aquél que se genera en el seno de la institución familiar (Coleman, 1987). Parece ser que si estos dos tipos de insumos logran darse simultánea y coherentemente, el efecto a nivel del desarrollo del niño es muy favorable.

A la escuela se le suelen atribuir muchos papeles. Se espera que ella por sí sola cree un país democrático, que prepare a los estudiantes para el trabajo, que inculque principios y valores, que impida el uso de drogas y que enseñe contenidos tales como matemáticas y lenguaje. Evidentemente, la escuela posee un ambiente adecuado para: a) transmitir los conocimientos básicos y las destrezas necesarias para convivir en sociedad; b) facilitar la adaptación del niño a su rol social; c) desarrollar

estructuras de pensamiento y herramientas cognoscitivas para la solución de problemas, y d) servir de vehículo de nivelación social y de fuerza conservadora de tradición y cultura. Por medio del profesor y de otras autoridades escolares, el centro educativo maneja mecanismos eficaces en la tarea de socializar al niño, como por ejemplo: recompensas, oportunidades, lazos afectivos entre maestro y alumno, etc.

El otro tipo de insumo es aquel que se produce en el hogar del niño (Coleman, 1987). Este segundo producto parece darse única y exclusivamente dentro del medio ambiente más cercano e intimamente relacionado con el niño (lo más común es que esté constituido por los padres, abuelos u otras personas cercanas afectivamente al niño). Los mecanismos que emplea la familia como agente de socialización, difieren de aquellos manejados en la escuela. La contribución de los padres y hermanos puede identificarse y definirse en términos de actitudes, hábitos de trabajo, esfuerzo sostenido, concepción del 'yo', juicio moral y valores. No hay que olvidar que el niño obtiene la primera imagen de sí mismo en la interacción familiar y esta imagen es la que le sirve de base para ir definiendo su rol social. Se trata del producto de una relación más íntima, más cercana al niño, más persistente y de mayor continuidad a través del tiempo (Almonte y Flores, 1982; Asheim, y otros, 1983; Douglas, 1964; Fotheringham y Creal, 1980; Itova, 1987; Lareau, 1987; Marjoribanks, 1976).

A pesar de que el tipo de influencia que ejerce el medio ambiente familiar sobre el desempeño escolar y la socialización del niño varía de un lugar a otro, incluso entre los diferentes grupos sociales dentro de un mismo país, se ha observado que esta influencia produce en países desarrollados, efectos más significativos en términos del desempeño a largo plazo, en comparación con la influencia ejercida por la institución educativa. A través de estudios recientes, es posible evidenciar que la adaptación y el rendimiento del niño en la primaria y la secundaria, así como los éxitos a nivel profesional, se relacionan y se explican más en función de las características del medio ambiente familiar que en función del tipo de educación que recibe el niño (Alwin y Thornton, 1984; Coleman, 1987). Sin embargo, la acción interdependiente y complementaria entre las dos instituciones, familia-escuela, constituye el eje central de cualquier intento de acción educativa. Se ha empezado a demostrar a través de experimentos recientes, la importante función que tiene aquella estrategia que integra a la familia y a la escuela hacia un objetivo común "el desarrollo integral del niño" (Stitely, 1978; Strom, 1984; Wise, G. y Thornburg, 1978; Zevina y Plotkin, 1978).

3. ¿Qué puede hacer la familia antes del ingreso del niño a la escuela para apoyar su aprendizaje?

La investigación sobre los factores que inciden en el desarrollo físico, psíquico y social del niño antes de iniciar su experiencia escolar tiene una larga tradición en los países europeos, así como en Norte América y más recientemente en América Latina, Asia y Africa.

Una de las aproximaciones más notables de esa investigación ha sido proporcionada por la problemática de la salud, particularmente bajo las categorías de la nutrición y de la medicina preventiva (Nedler y McAfee, 1979; Rapaport y otros; Denison, 1978, citados en Kotliarenco, 1987). Los estudios realizados bajo esta perspectiva, inicialmente de carácter descriptivo, clínico y posteriormente experimental, han demostrado la importancia que tienen variables tales como la buena nutrición del niño y de la madre, el medio ambiente físico en el cual crece el niño, el control preventivo y cuidados generales de la salud del pequeño, y todas aquellas acciones de la familia dirigidas hacia la supervivencia y el crecimiento del niño.

Una segunda aproximación está constituída por la investigación psicosocial y educativa (Comer, 1984; Halpern, 1986; Scott-Jones, 1984). Numerosas contribuciones, particularmente los estudios experimentales y de carácter piloto, han demostrado la influencia favorable y determinante que tienen un conjunto de factores, denominados por algunos como "variables de proceso" (Davé, 1966; Scott-Jones, 1984), sobre el desarrollo del niño y su futuro rendimiento escolar. Estas variables se relacionan ante todo con aquellas acciones educativas que emprende la familia con el niño, tales como: el tipo y la calidad de estimulación, las experiencias de desarrollo intelectual que se le presentan al niño, los distintos intereses y motivaciones del medio ambiente familiar, el contenido de las actividades que se desarrollan en el hogar, las características del vínculo afectivo, interacción y comunicación entre el niño y sus padres y hermanos. Así mismo, son igualmente determinantes a este nivel, las expectativas y aspiraciones que tienen los padres para con sus hijos, ya que estas van a orientar y dirigir el comportamiento y la actitud del medio ambiente familiar en general.

Durante los últimos diez años, un número importante de investigadores ha intentado rescatar y conocer más a fondo aquellas variables esenciales que determinan el rol de la familia en el desarrollo integral del niño y su impacto sobre el futuro rendimiento escolar (Dembrowsky, 1983;

Geanowsky, 1977; Janhon, 1983). Se han realizado numerosos experimentos que han demostrado que no sólo el crecimiento físico de los niños pre-escolares depende en gran parte del cuidado familiar sino también su desarrollo mental y social. El resultado de estas experiencias motiva a muchos países a emprender programas sociales a escalas más amplias, particularmente para responder a las necesidades de las comunidades más pobres. Desafortunadamente, los programas masivos de intervención en países en desarrollo no poseen, en su gran mayoría, evaluaciones sistemáticas.

Sin embargo, existe en la actualidad suficiente evidencia investigativa a través de la cual se demuestra que la estructura y dinámica interna de la familia, así como el bagaje que trae consigo el niño en el momento de ingresar a la escuela, son factores determinantes del desempeño académico a corto y a largo plazo (Halpern, 1986; Scott-Jones, 1984). La colaboración del medio ambiente familiar y su acción sobre el proceso de socialización, constituye una medida esencial para tender un puente entre el hogar y la escuela y garantizar la permanencia de los efectos de las intervenciones pre-escolares en el tiempo.

Resumiendo, podríamos identificar algunos de los principales antecedentes y factores característicos del medio ambiente familiar que influyen sobre la futura adaptación y desempeño del niño en la escuela y que son susceptibles de mejoramiento. Entre los antecedentes familiares o variables de status se pueden mencionar:

a) las condiciones nutricionales del niño y la madre;
b) el estado de salud del niño desde su primer año de vida;
c) el medio ambiente físico en el cual crece y se desarrolla el niño;
d) la configuración de la familia y su <u>status</u> socioeconómico.

Existen además otras características del medio ambiente familiar que poseen una gran potencialidad por su naturaleza dinámica y que pueden apoyar al niño para que su ingreso a la escuela sea más fácil y su permanencia en ella más exitosa, tales como:

a) el tipo y la calidad de la estimulación física, psicológica y social;
b) actividades e intereses fuera y dentro del hogar que se proporcionan al niño desde edad temprana;
c) las experiencias de interacción con el medio ambiente físico que estimulen y faciliten el desarrollo de estructuras elementales de pensamiento;

d) la calidad de la interacción y comunicación entre miembros de la familia;
e) las estrategias educativas utilizadas por los padres de familia (juegos educativos, películas, marionetas, etc.); y
f) las expectativas de los padres relacionadas con la educación de sus hijos.

4. ¿Qué puede hacer la familia durante los primeros años de escolarización del niño para apoyar su aprendizaje?

Recientemente se han llevado a cabo varios estudios comparativos entre diferentes paises sobre las condiciones que favorecen el rendimiento escolar. Estos estudios han demostrado que al comparar las experiencias educativas, existen diferencias importantes en sus resultados entre los paises, así como en diferentes regiones del mismo país. Estas diferencias se relacionan con el tipo de currículo utilizado, las oportunidades de aprendizaje que se ofrecen al niño, así como con el nivel de preparación del maestro y las metodologías de enseñanza empleadas.

De manera muy generalizada, es posible evidenciar que el factor que en mayor grado parece explicar las diferencias individuales entre alumnos, es el que tiene que ver con las características del ambiente familiar del niño. Coleman y Plowden (citado en Bloom, 1981), encontraron que la variable "medio ambiente familiar" explicaba la mayor proporción de la varianza en el aprendizaje para los diferentes alumnos.

Las diferencias entre los colegios, los profesores, los currículos y métodos de enseñanza empleados parecen ser relativamente pequeñas, en comparación con las diferencias que se presentan a nivel de las características de los hogares de los niños (Bloom, 1974; Walker, 1976, citado en Bloom, 1981).

Estos hallazgos han sido de fundamental importancia para los educadores y planificadores educacionales. Como consecuencia se han venido produciendo cambios bastante radicales en el tipo de problemática y de preguntas que se plantea hoy en día la investigación educativa.

Mucho se trabajó en una época sobre desarrollo curricular, formación docente y tecnologías educativas, buscando estudiar el efecto potencial que podrían tener estos factores sobre el desempeño del niño en la escuela. Este movimiento tiende a complementarse actualmente por medio de estudios que se centran en el descubrimiento y conocimiento de aquellas características del medio ambiente

familiar y su relación con la efectividad de los aprendizajes y con el rendimiento escolar a corto y largo plazo.

El objetivo más general de esta nueva línea de investigación, es conocer y comprender los factores del ambiente familiar que afectan el aprendizaje del niño en el colegio, e identificar a partir de allí, las acciones que los padres podrían cumplir para motivar, apoyar y estimular a sus hijos durante los primeros años de escolaridad.

Los trabajos experimentales realizados bajo este enfoque, han intentado producir variaciones a nivel de algunos factores del medio ambiente familiar para observar sus efectos sobre el rendimiento del niño en la escuela. Autores como Bronfenbrenner, 1974 (citado en Bloom, 1981) plantean que los padres -si quieren y están dispuestos a hacerlo- podrían modificar algunos de los procesos que se llevan a cabo en el hogar y así generar efectos positivos sobre el comportamiento del niño,

Davé (1963) y Wolf (1966), a través de técnicas de entrevista y de observación participativa, investigaron ciertas variables relacionadas con la interacción entre padres e hijos dentro del medio ambiente familiar. Estos estudios preliminares (Davé y Wolf, 1963; Marjoribanks, 1979) han permitido plantear las primeras hipótesis acerca de los posibles determinantes propios del medio ambiente familiar que puedan influir y producir cambios interesantes en el rendimiento del niño en la escuela.

Para llevar a cabo los primeros estudios experimentales sobre el medio ambiente familiar, se han identificado algunas variables relacionadas más con tipo de actividades que los padres hacen y pueden desarrollar con sus hijos, dejando un poco de lado características de los padres como edad, nivel educativo, status socioeconómico, etc., las cuales, según autores como Bloom (1978), Comer (1984), Davé (1963), Halpern (1984) y Wolf (1966) entre otros, no han sido suficientes para predecir y comprender la posible relación entre medio familiar y rendimiento del niño en la escuela.

Davé (1963), seleccionó cinco variables principales, las cuales son consideradas como aquellas actividades que los padres podrían llevar a cabo con sus hijos sin importar cuál sea el nivel socio-económico de la familia, la ocupación o nivel educativo de la madre o del padre.

1. <u>Desarrollo de hábitos de trabajo</u>:

   - Establecimiento de horarios para las

diferentes actividades que se realizan dentro y fuera de la casa.
- Organización y regularidad en las tareas tanto acedémicas como recreativas.
- Delimitación del tiempo y del espacio para cada actividad que se realiza en el hogar.
- Dar prioridad a las actividades de tipo educativo, cultural y a la lectura, sobre las diversiones como ver T.V..

2. Orientación académica y apoyo para el estudio:

- Ofrecer apoyo permanente al niño para la realización de sus labores académicas.
- Ayudar al niño en las materias en que tenga dificultades.
- Identificar los principales intereses académicos que tenga el niño y proporcionar experiencias de enriquecimiento a ese nivel.

3. Estimulación dentro del medio ambiente familiar:

- Facilitar y permitir el descubrimiento y la exploración de nuevas fuentes de conocimiento y desarrollo personal.

4. Desarrollo del lenguaje:

- Estimular el desarrollo del lenguaje. Corregir y ayudar a mejorar posibles dificultades en el uso del lenguaje.
- Crear oportunidades que estimulen y faciliten el enriquecimiento del vocabulario.

5. Aspiraciones y expectativas de los padres:

- Las aspiraciones y expectativas que tienen los padres en relación con el tipo de educación y de formación que desean ofrecerles a sus hijos, van a orientar y dirigir la interacción padre-hijo, el monto y la calidad del estímulo que le ofrezcan a sus hijos, la motivación hacia cierto tipo de actividades y no otras, así como el tipo de oportunidades que se le dan al niño y el nivel de exigencia que se le impone.

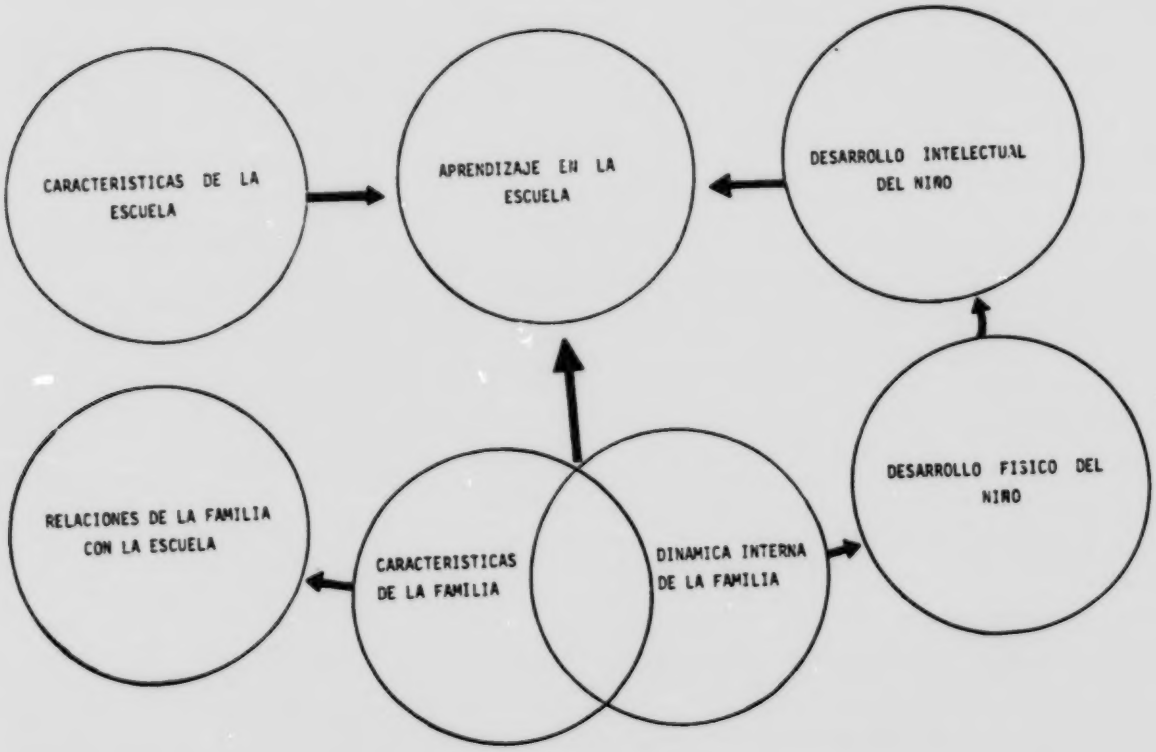
La evidencia que poseemos sobre la relación familia-escuela indica que la contribución de la familia al aprendizaje de los niños en la escuela radica no solamente en que le proporciona los recursos físicos necesarios sino en que les puede brindar un apoyo decisivo de una manera

activa como lo resume la ilustración No. 1, en la que se presentan los diferentes conjuntos de variables que parecen estar relacionadas con el rendimiento escolar infantil.

La investigación hecha, especialmente en países del Tercer Mundo, ha demostrado que existen otros aspectos del proceso de la educación en la escuela primaria que son susceptibles de mejoramiento a través de la familia, tales como la disponibilidad de textos y libros para los niños. El acceso al texto escolar tiene relaciones positivas con el rendimiento escolar. La interacción con los maestros y una relación coherente con la escuela puede proporcionar el apoyo continuo que los niños necesitan para tener éxito en su empresa de aprendizaje.

Ilustración No. 1

Contribución de la familia al aprendizaje escolar


CARACTERISTICAS DE LA ESCUELA
APRENDIZAJE EN LA ESCUELA
DESARROLLO INTELECTUAL DEL NIÑO
RELACIONES DE LA FAMILIA CON LA ESCUELA
CARACTERISTICAS DE LA FAMILIA
DINAMICA INTERNA DE LA FAMILIA
DESARROLLO FISICO DEL NIÑO

5. ¿Cuáles son las tendencias de la investigación actual que pueden tener una repercusión en la educación de los niños de primaria?

Los científicos sociales tienen la responsabilidad de proporcionar a la sociedad la información y orientación necesarias para mejorar e incrementar cada día más las oportunidades de éxito de las futuras generaciones. La investigación educativa en la actualidad tiene varios retos fundamentales, entre los que podríamos enumerar los siguientes:

La investigación debe continuar el examen de los cambios que se están presentando en las sociedades contemporáneas y que ejercen influencia determinante sobre el núcleo familiar, su estructura y organización interna.

A través de estudios experimentales controlados es importante seguir profundizando sobre aquellas variables del medio ambiente familiar que influyen y determinan en gran medida el proceso de socialización y el rendimiento futuro del niño en la escuela. Con base en los hallazgos obtenidos a través de ese tipo de experiencias, se podrían diseñar e implementar intervenciones específicas, a través de las cuales sea posible generar cambios en el rendimiento a partir de variaciones a nivel de variables previsoras del medio ambiente familiar.

La investigación deberá enfatizar y estimular la participación de los padres así como de paraprofesionales en el ámbito de la educación pre-escolar, resaltando la importancia de dicha contribución sobre el desempeño escolar y sobre el desarrollo integral del niño y del futuro adulto.

El papel que desempeña la familia en el proceso de transición del niño de la escuela pre-escolar a la primaria, aún no se ha estudiado en detalle, y la contribución de la investigación a este nivel se hace cada día más necesaria.

Complementario al punto anterior, se requiere profundizar sobre la participación de las sociedades y comunidades locales en la educación de sus niños, lo cual incluye una vinculación activa de los padres y de otros líderes y responsables de la educación y desarrollo de diferentes actividades de aprendizaje dentro y fuera de la escuela primaria.

A medida que avanzan los programas de intervención y los estudios experimentales, se adquiere nuevo conocimiento

sobre la dinámica interna de la familia, los potenciales conflictos que pueden surgir como resultado de alterar las variables "del proceso" y sobre las pautas de aprendizaje durante una etapa decisiva de la vida humana.

Finalmente, los procedimientos evaluativos se hacen cada día más necesarios tanto a grande como a pequeña escala. Muchas son las experiencias de intervención que hasta la fecha no han sido evaluadas y cuyos hallazgos son indispensables para el futuro desarrollo de planes y reformas educacionales.

R E C O M E N D A C I O N E S P R A C T I C A S

¿Qué puede hacer la familia para apoyar el aprendizaje del niño en la escuela?

1. PREPARACION PARA LA ESCUELA

   a) Proteger la salud del niño es una contribución permanente para su éxito escolar.
   b) La educación temprana en el hogar contribuye al desarrollo de destrezas intelectuales que constituyen la base del aprendizaje futuro.
   c) Una buena experiencia pre-escolar prepara al niño para el ambiente escolar.
   d) Los juegos y actividades realizados sistemáticamente, también pueden servir como preparación para el aprendizaje en la escuela.

2. CUIDAR EL DESARROLLO DEL LENGUAJE

   a) El énfasis familiar sobre una correcta expresión refuerza las pautas de un lenguaje escolar apropiado.
   b) Un diccionario constituye una herramienta fundamental en el desarrollo del lenguaje del niño.
   c) En las conversaciones familiares los niños deberían tener la oportunidad de hablar y ser escuchados.
   d) La lectura puede estimularse enseñando a los niños a utilizar el material disponible.

3. HABITOS DE TRABAJO

   a) La familia debería planificar las diversas actividades infantiles: estudiar, jugar, comer, etc..
   b) Un lugar de estudio tranquilo es muy útil para fomentar hábitos de trabajo escolar.
   c) En las actividades familiares debería existir cierto grado de estructuración, participación y puntualidad.
   d) Sería ideal realizar el trabajo escolar y la lectura antes de jugar, ver televisión o realizar otras actividades.

4. AMPLIANDO EL MUNDO DEL NIÑO

a) Los juegos educacionales y actividades similares deberían compartirse con los niños.

b) La familia debería compartir discusiones sobre libros, periódicos, revistas, programas de radio y televisión.

c) La familia debería planear visitas a museos, zoológicos, lugares históricos, galerías y otros lugares de interés.

d) Los miembros de la familia deberían ser animados a participar en actividades culturales de la comunidad.

5. INTERACCION CON LOS PROFESORES

a) En los posible, los padres deben evaluar cuidadosamente las diferentes escuelas mediante previa información de las mismas, antes de inscribir a sus hijos.

b) Una interacción frecuente con los profesores podría ayudar a controlar el progreso de un niño.

c) Las notas escolares deberían discutirse con los niños.

d) Algunas veces los niños necesitan de un esfuerzo especial por parte de sus profesores que debe ser apoyado por la familia.

e) Cuando el ambiente familiar y escolar son contradictorios, los niños no saben como comportarse.

6. TEXTOS ESCOLARES

a) Si el colegio no suministra textos escolares, la familia debería proporcionar al niño los textos básicos utilizados en la escuela.

b) Los cuadernos reflejan el progreso del niño en la escuela y son buenos intermediarios entre la familia y la escuela.

c) El material de consulta podría coleccionarse a base de periódicos, revistas, libros, etc..

7. APOYO DINAMICO PARA EL TRABAJO ESCOLAR

a) Sin el continuo apoyo y orientación familiar, probablemente los niños encuentren difícil interesarse y comprometerse con el aprendizaje escolar.

b) La familia debería estimular continuamente al niño respecto al trabajo escolar.

c) Alguién en la familia debería brindar orientación en las tareas escolares cuando el niño la necesita.

d) El conocimiento de los padres de las fortalezas y debilidades del aprendizaje del niño en la escuela, es una importante herramienta para proporcionarle la ayuda adecuada.

e) Es altamente deseable que en el hogar se disponga del tiempo y espacio apropiado para que el niño desarrolle su trabajo académico.

f) La supervisión familiar sobre las tareas del niño en casa es un apoyo dinámico en el aprendizaje escolar.

8. MOTIVACION PARA APRENDER

a) Los padres determinan los "standars" para el aprendizaje del niño, pero también deberían ayudarle mediante una comunicación continua.

b) Los padres comunican a sus niños el nivel y tipo de educación que les gustaría ellos tuviesen.

c) Si el ambiente familiar contiene conceptos positivos del niño, éste desarrollará profundos sentimientos de autoestima; a su vez, el rendimiento escolar puede reforzar la autoconfianza del niño.

F A M I L Y A N D L E A R N I N G

Readings from recent research

There is general agreement that many of the problems facing society today -- drug addiction, violence, massive losses in life quality, controllable diseases which spread rapidly, etc. -- cannot be solved without the decided support of educational institutions. Educational institutions exist all over the world and are a part of people's daily lives; within them, there is more knowledge available on teaching and learning and on the human life-cycle than ever before. And yet they seem powerless to act. In the last fifty years we have learned more about the dynamics of human development than in the whole of recorded history; yet we have great difficulty in using these discoveries in the process of socializing new generations.

Knowledge of human development has been enriched by research in areas such as public health, nutrition, social sciences, and particularly, in the areas of psychology and education. Discoveries made to date have confirmed the importance of the first few years of life to the later development of the individual, and that the possibility exists to exert positive influences on this process.

FOCUSING ON PRIMARY SCHOOL

As a result, many researchers have been moved to design and test intervention strategies, especially at the preschool stage, which are often based on family activities. This intensity of interest is not maintained through to the next stage, primary school. It is as if once the child is in formal primary school, responsibility is passed from the family to other social institutions. Nonetheless, the family is still a fundamental context for the socialization of the child and a source of success in other contexts, as some studies show (Bloom, 1981; Comer, 1984; Scott-Jones, 1984).

The bibliography below is mainly focused on the family-school relationship in the early years of the child's schooling, and only marginally on the question of preschool intervention and its effects. The review is not exhaustive, but it covers a sample of recent work published in North America, parts of Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The studies from Africa and Southeast Asia were typically associated with large-scale government projects of a general kind which were related to the development and growth of young children.

Most of the studies are essentially qualitative and basically exploratory; many use ethnographic methods and anthropological approaches; a few are emerging with experimental purposes. In Thailand, for example, one intervention program demonstrated the positive results of activities aimed at improving school performance through parents' education (Janhon, 1983).

In Latin America, while there is plenty of material available on the history of child development up to five years of age, there is little on learning, the family, and primary schooling. This bibliography rescues some work which may be directly or indirectly related to the child's success in primary school.

Most of the Latin American studies touch on the problems of family-school relationship indirectly, but none of them provides enough information to give guidance for the formulation of coherent policies. As noted above, research into the early years of life has been abundant and, in some countries, useful for designing social policies. A number of analyses have been made of the internal and external success of primary schooling, using in connection with international loans to the education sector. Despite this, social research has for some reason relegated the possibilities of family support to formal education to a lower level of priority. Latin American research related to the problems of the school-family relationship has not used any very innovative methodologies and has resulted in providing little explanatory or analytical material.

It has been mainly in North America and parts of Europe that work has been undertaken for some years on the exploration and identification of family factors and characteristics of the home which may intervene in the socialization of children during primary schooling. From a number of descriptive studies, it has been possible to demonstrate the importance and the decisive role of variables in the family environment in the child's performance at school. While experimental and intervention studies are still scarce, there is evidence that family formation is of vital importance in schools and that this relationship can be positively influenced.

Research in the field is very promising, given the universal need to improve formal education, especially among peoples who have suffered the most negative effects of recent international financial difficulties.

Although there are many questions to be asked for which there is no material available to supply the answers, research can provide guidance and alternatives that deserve to be explored by families, governments and communication media throughout the world.

Key Questions

The following questions can help introduce the reader to the growing literature being developed on the issue of children's learning and their families' support: Is the family crumbling as a primary socialization institution?; would it be better to assign education to those trained to provide it, and leave the family with the responsibility for supplying necessary resources?; what can the family do to prepare the child for formal education?; what can the family do during the child's first years of schooling to support learning?; and what trends in current research may have repercussions on primary education?

1. Is the family crumbling as a primary socialization institution?

The socialization process begins at home, and it is precisely within the family that a series of important changes in the interactions between members have taken place, in roles, cultural expectations and functions in the context of the changes and demands of contemporary society.

Some researchers say that the family is perhaps the nucleus where social change is most visible (Scott-Jones, 1986; Durojaiye, M.O.A., 1984; Mamani, P.M., 1982; Mink, I.T. and Nihira K., 1986; Moari, I.M., 1984; Otaala, B., 1983). It is common today to speak of the "crisis of the family" as the central problem of our society. There is much concern about actions, standards, principles and values being imparted by the family of today; there is a growing preoccupation as to whether the family is assuming the socialization function which it should, and whether it is offering children the support they need for their growth, development and education (Coleman, 1987).

The family as a social institution is changing, but at the same time, it is showing an enormous capacity for

adaptation despite the fact that two of its traditional pillars -- procreation and marriage -- have declined statistically.

First, family size has been reduced, and today most families commonly consist of only two or three people. Second, there is no single pattern of family life; there are so many different types of arrangements that classification has become difficult. Nonetheless, the family continues to be the basic cell in the structure of contemporary society (Scott-Jones, 1986).

The increasing speed with which all these structural changes are taking place makes it difficult to assimilate and analyze the implications for the lives of tomorrow's children. Nonetheless, the family obviously continues to have a decisive influence on the physical, intellectual and social development of the child, and in facing the various problems that arise at different stages. During the early years, nutrition, basic health care, language and early stimulation are a focus of attention and support given by parents to children. During the pre-school and primary school years, problems centre on adaptation to the school environment, the development of learning aptitudes, and the development of moral judgement and values. Later, in adolescence, social behaviour, academic success and career concerns become the dominant considerations.

Over many years, social research has consistently shown the close relationship between parents' education and the academic performance of their children; between social and economic status and the physical and mental development of small children; and between the attitudes of adults and the behaviour of children.

These conclusions seem to be no more than a matter of common sense. However, changes now occurring in the family prompt some questions, such as: what is the function of the "modern" family?, what is its role in education and the formation of tomorrow's generation?, how and on what terms do we establish the family's interaction with other socializing institutions such as the educational system?. Since a child will develop in the twin context of the family and the school, what is the potential role of the family, and what should the functions of the school be?, in what terms can we describe family-school interactions? These and other similar questions are being faced by social policies everywhere, but particularly in countries where the child population is in greatest need and has the least resources available.

2. **Would it be better to assign education to those trained to provide it, and leave the family with the responsibility for supplying necessary resources?**

The family and the school as socializing institutions make different contributions to the process of education. Functions and products provided by the school are distinct from but complementary to those generated within the family (Coleman, 1987). It seems that if the two types of input can be provided simultaneously and made to complement each other, the effect on the child's development will be highly favourable.

The school is attributed with many roles: it is expected to create democracy, prepare pupils for their working lives, inculcate principles and values, prevent the taking of drugs and teach mathematics and language. Plainly, a school has an environment suited to: a) transmitting basic knowledge and the skills needed to live in society, b) enabling the child to adapt to its social role, c) developing structured thinking and the cognitive tools needed for problem-solving, and d) serving as a vehicle of social levels and as a force for the conservation of tradition and culture. The teacher and other persons of authority in the school use effective mechanisms to socialize the child such as rewards, opportunities, affection between teacher and pupil, etc.

The other input is provided in the home (Coleman, 1987). It seems to be forthcoming only within the closest and most intimate circle of the child's life (usually involving parents, grandparents or others closest to the affections of the child). The family as a socializing influence uses different mechanisms to those employed by the school. The contributions of parents and brother and sisters can be defined in terms of attitudes, work habits, sustained effort, the concept of "self", moral judgement and values. It must not be forgotten that children find the first image of themselves in family interactions, and that this image is the basis on which children begin to define their role in society. This is the product of a more intimate relationship, closer to the child and more consistent and continuous over time (Almonte and Flores, 1982; Asheim and Col., 1983; Douglas, 1964; Fotheringham and Creal, 1980; Itova, 1987; Marjoribanks, 1976).

The type of influence exercised by the family environment over school performance and socialization varies from place to place, and indeed among different social groups in a single country. However, it has been observed that in developed countries the family's influence has more significant effects on long-term performance in comparison with the influence of the educational process. Recent studies provide some evidence

that the adaptation and performance of a child in primary and secondary school and career success are more closely related to and explained by characteristics of the family environment than by the type of education received (Alvin and Thornton, 1984; Coleman, 1987). However, the interdependence and complementarity of activities between the family and the school is the essence of any educational effort. Recent experiments have begun to demonstrate the important function of a strategy which integrates family and school towards the common objective of the "integrated development of the child" (Stitely, 1978; Strom, 1984; Wise, G. and Thornburg, 1978; Zevina and Plotkin, 1978).

3. What can the family do to prepare the child for formal education?

Research on factors affecting physical, psychological and social development before formal education begins has a long history in Europe, North America and, more recently, in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

One of the most important approaches of this type of research has been provided by the health sector, especially in the areas of nutrition and preventive medicine (Nedler and McAfee, 1979; Rapaport and Col.; Denison, 1978, quoted in Kotliarenco, 1987). Studies in this area were initially descriptive and clinical, and later became experimental. They have shown the importance of such variables as good maternal and child nutrition, the physical environment in which the child grows up, preventative control and general health care for small children, and all the other actions of the family aimed at the survival and growth of the child.

A second approach is that of pscho-social and educational research (Comer, 1984; Halpern, 1986; Scott-Jones, 1984). A number of contributions, especially from experimental studies and pilot activities, have shown the favourable and decisive influence of a set of factors, which some have called "process variables" (Davé, 1966; Scott-Jones, 1984), on the development of children and their future scholastic performance. These variables are mostly related to educational activities undertaken by the family with the child, such as the type and quality of stimulation, experiences in intellectual development presented to the child, the different interests and motivations of the family environment, the content of activities in the home, and the types of affection, interaction and communication which exist between the child and parents, brothers and sisters. Equally decisive at this level are the expectations and aspirations of the parents for their children, which serve as the basis for the behaviour and attitude of the family environment as a whole.

In the last ten years, a significant number of researchers have tried to identify and examine in greater depth the essential variables determining the role of the family in the integrated development of the child, and its impact on future scholastic performance (Dembrovsky, 1983; Geanowsky, 1977; Janhon, 1983). Several experiments have been undertaken showing that family care plays a major role not only in physical growth but also in mental and social development. The results of these experiments have encouraged many countries to conduct social programmes on a wider scale, especially in response to the needs of the poorest parts of their populations. Unfortunately the massive intervention programs of the developing countries usually lack any means for systematic evaluation.

Nonetheless, there is today enough evidence from research to show that the role of the family and the formation children take with them to school are decisive factors in scholastic performance in the short and long term (Halpern, 1986; Scott-Jones, 1984). The cooperation of the family and the family's actions in the socialization process are essential means of building a bridge between the home and the school and of guaranteeing the permanence of results over time.

In brief, we can identify some of the most important background aspects and characteristics of the family which influence the future performance and adaptation of the child. Of the family background, or "status," variables we could mention:

a) maternal and child nutrition;
b) the child's health from the age of 1;
c) the physical environment in which the child grows;
d) family structure and social and economic status.

There are other environmental factors in the family which may be very important, since they are dynamic and may help the child to enter formal education more easily, and be more successful there:

a) the type and quality of physical, psychological and social stimulation;
b) activities and interests outside the home, provided from an early age;
c) interaction with the physical environment which stimulates the child and enables the development of elementary thinking structures;
d) the quality of interaction and communication between family members;
e) the parents' educational strategies (educational games, films, puppets, etc.);
f) the parents' expectations for their child's

schooling.

4. **What can the family do during the child's first years of schooling to support learning?**

Comparative work has been done on educational experiences in different countries, using variables such as scholastic performance, interests, motivation and attitudes. These studies have shown that comparisons of educational experiences bring out important differences from country to country and in different regions of the same country. These differences between and within the countries studied are related to the type of curriculum in use, the learning opportunities offered to the child, the educational levels of the teachers and teaching methods.

On the whole, though, it can be shown that the factor explaining the widest differences between pupils is that which concerns characteristics of the child's family environment. Coleman and Plowden (quoted by Bloom, 1981) found that the variable "family environment" explained most variations in learning achievement.

Differences between schools, teachers, curricula and teaching methods seem relatively small compared to differences in home characteristics (Bloom, 1974; Walker, 1976, quoted by Bloom, 1981).

These discoveries have been of basic importance to educators and education planners, and as a result there have been some quite radical changes in the kind of problems and questions posed today in educational research.

At one time, researchers focussed most of their attention on curriculum development, teacher training and educational technology with the goal of discovering the potential effect of these factors on a child's progress at school. That trend has now increasingly been complemented by studies designed to discover and to understand the characteristics of the family environment and their relationship to the effectiveness of the learning process, and to school performance in the short and long term.

The most general objective of this new line of research is to discover and understand the factors in the family environment which affect the child's learning at school, and then to identify actions which parents might take to motivate, support and stimulate their children during the first few years at school.

Experimental work done with this intention has attempted to bring out variations in some aspects of the family environment in order to observe their effects on school performance. Bronfenbrenner (1974, quoted in Bloom, 1981) and others suggest that parents, if they wish and are prepared to do so, could change some of their practices in the home and that this would have a positive effect on their children's performance.

Davé (1963) and Wolf (1966), using interviewing and participative observation techniques, conducted research on certain variables related to the interaction between parents and children within the family environment. These preliminary studies (Davé and Wolf, 1963; Marjoribanks, 1979) have allowed preliminary hypotheses to be proposed in relation to the decisive factors of the family environment which may influence and bring about interesting changes in the child's school performance.

For the first experimental studies on the family environment, some variables have been identified as related more to the type of activities which parents do or could do with their children, than to other parental variables, such as age, education level, social and economic status, etc. Bloom (1978), Comer (1984), Davé (1963), Halpern (1984), Wolf (1966) and others say that these other variables are not sufficient to predict or understand the possible relationship between family environment and school performance.

Davé (1963) selected five main variables considered as activities which parents could share with their children without reference to the social or economic status of the family, or the occupation or educational level of either parent.

1. <u>The development of work-habits</u>:

- Establishing a timetable for different activities in and outside the home.
- Systematically organizing tasks to be done in the home, whether academic or recreational.
- Limiting time and space for each activity in the home.
- Giving priority to educational and cultural activities and reading, over distractions such as TV.

2. <u>Academic guidance and support in study</u>:

- Offering permanent support to the child in academic tasks.
- Help in subjects which the child finds difficult.

- Identifying the child's main academic interests, and enriching the child's experiences in these.

3. Stimulation within the family environment:

- Stimulating and allowing discovery and exploration of new sources of knowledge and personality development.

4. Development of language:

- Stimulating language use. Correcting, helping and improving possible difficulties in language use.
- Creating opportunities to stimulate and enable the enrichment of vocabulary.

5. Parents' expectations and aspirations:

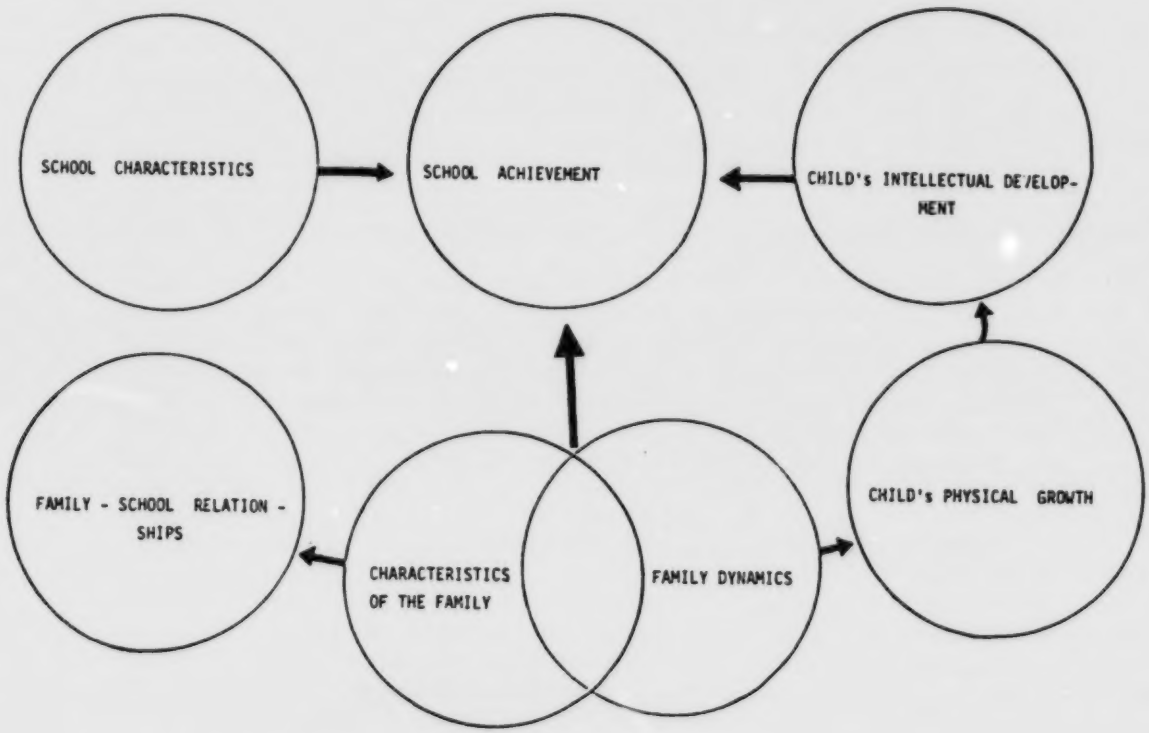
- Parents' aspirations and expectations for the type of education and formation their children are to receive will govern parent-child interactions, the amount and quality of stimulus offered to children, the motivation to adopt certain courses of action and avoid others, and the type of opportunities given to the child and the demands imposed upon the child.

The evidence we have on family-school relationships indicates that the family's contribution to their children's learning goes far beyond the provision of physical resources; the family can offer substantial and active support to their children's learning as illustrated in Figure No. 1, which shows the different sets of variables that are empirically related to school achievement at the primary level.

Research conducted particularly in developing countries has also indicated that there are other aspects of the educational process in primary schools that are subject to improvement by families, such as the availability of text-books for their children. Text-book availability is positively related to school performance. Interaction with teachers and a coherent relationship with the school may provide the continuous support that children need in order to succeed in their learning endeavours.

Figure No. 1

The family's contribution to school learning



5. What trends in current research may have repercussions on primary education?

Social scientists have the responsibility of providing society with the information and guidance it needs to improve and increase day by day opportunities for success for future generations. Research in education today faces a number of challenges, amongst which are the following:

Research must continue to examine the changes taking place in contemporary societies which are exercising a decisive influence on the family nucleus, structure and internal organization.

Through controlled experiments, more in-depth knowledge must be acquired of the variables in the family environment which influence and to a great extent determine the child's socialization and future performance in school. On the basis of the findings, specific interventions can be designed and implemented to generate change in school performance using the variables to predict the effects of family environment.

Research must emphasize and stimulate parental and para-professional participation in the pre-school stage, emphasizing the importance of its contribution to the future performance children in formal schooling and their integrated development towards future adult life.

The part to be played by the family in the child's transition from pre-school to primary education has not yet received detailed study, the contribution of research to this question is becoming an increasingly urgent need.

In complement to this, more in-depth study is needed on the participation of society and the local community in the education of small children, including the active involvement of parents and other leaders and those responsible for education and the development of different learning activities inside and outside primary school.

Finally, evaluation procedures are also needed with increasing urgency, on a large scale as well as on a small scale. Many intervention experiences have not yet been evaluated, and their findings are essential for the future development, planning and reform of education.

As interventions and experiments advance, new knowledge will be developed on the internal dynamics of the family, the potential conflicts emerging as a result of altering "process variables", and on the pattern of learning in this decisive stage of human life.

P R A C T I C A L G U I D E L I N E S

What can the family do to support a child's school learning?

1. PREPARATION FOR SCHOOL

a) Protecting the child's health is a long-term contribution to school success.

b) Early education at home contributes to the development of intellectual skills which are the bases for further learning.

c) A good pre-school experience prepares children for the school environment.

d) Games and activities, systematically used, can also serve as preparation for learning at school.

2. CARING FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

a) Family emphasis on correct speech habits reinforces appropriate language patterns necessary in school.

b) A dictionary is a good reference tool.

c) Children should have the opportunity to speak and be heard in frequent conversations with the family.

d) Reading can be encouraged by teaching children how to use available material.

3. WORK HABITS

a) The family can allocate time for different activities: studying, playing, eating, etc.

b) A quiet study place may be helpful.

c) There should be certain degree of structure, sharing and punctuality in home activities.

d) Schoolwork and reading should ideally be done before play, T.V. or other activities.

4. WIDENING THE CHILD'S WORLD

a) Family interests in hobbies, educational games and similar activities could be shared with children.

b) Families should share discussions on books, newspapers, magazines, radio and T.V. programs.

c) Families should plan visits to museums, zoos, historical sites, galleries, and other places of interest.

d) Members of the family should be encouraged to participate in community cultural activities.

5. INTERACTION WITH TEACHERS

a) When possible, parents should carefully assess different alternatives for school selection by obtaining previous information about school characteristics.

b) Frequent interaction with teachers may help to monitor a child's progress.

c) School grades should be discussed with children.

d) A teacher's special efforts to support a child's work should be actively supported by parents.

e) When family and school environments are contradictory, children do not know how to behave.

6. TEXT BOOKS

a) If the school does not provide text books, the family should try to make available for the child the basic text-books used in the school.

b) The copy book also reflects the chlld's progress at school and may be a good medium of communication between the family and the school.

c) Reference material could be collected from newspapers, magazines, books, etc.

7. ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL WORK

a) Children will probably find it difficult to maintain their interest in and commitment to school learning without continuous family support and guidance.

b) The family should positively encourage children continuously in their school work.

c) Guidance for homework when necessary could be provided by someone in the family.

d) Parental knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in the child's school learning is an important tool to provide appropriate support.

e) Time and room for academic work is highly desirable.

f) Family supervision of the child's homework is an active support to academic work.

8. MOTIVATION TO LEARN

a) Parents set the standards for their child's learning and should also provide support through continuous communication.

b) Parents communicate to their children the level of education and the type of education they would like the child to have.

c) If the family environment contains positive concepts of the child, the child will probably come to have a positive sense of personal identity. School achievement may reinforce self-confidence.

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